Blind Man's Bluff

Part I
of a two-part serial

By RABOO RODGERS

Tim sat in the big stuffed chair with his feet resting on the footstool and listened to the rain come down in torrents. It must be getting dark outside, he thought. Ben, his older brother, had been gone several hours, and it seemed like a long time since the disk jockey on KAAY had announced it was five o'clock.

He laughed a dry, humorless laugh to himself. What difference did it make if it *was* getting dark outside? For him it was dark all the time. Ever since he had driven in hard on that fast break for a game-winning lay-up against Bartleton and had crashed into the brick wall at the end of the gym, everything had been dark.

He slammed his right fist into the palm of his left hand. It was ironic, he thought. He had missed the shot, his team had lost the game, and he had lost his sight. Now Tim Dixon was blind.

He remembered coming to in the hospital and hearing voices around him — his brother's voice, his coach's, and then Doc Gulley's, who asked him if he saw anything. He didn't. Doc Gulley's voice had become tight and concerned, and Tim had heard either Ben or Coach Williams exhale softly. Then he had panicked and cried out, "I can't see! Oh no! I'm blind!" And he had begun thrashing his arms about wildly, and Doc Gulley and Ben had had to hold him down until he became calm again. "You've got to take it easy, Tim," Doc Gulley had said. "You hit that wall with your head pretty hard. Your loss of sight may be only temporary. We won't know for a while. You've got to have courage."

Courage. That's pretty hard to come by, when for 17 years you've had 20-20 vision, and then suddenly you're blind. Every night for three months he had gone to bed, hoping that in the morning he would see the sun. And every morning when he woke up, he would lie there in bed with his eyes tightly shut and say to himself, "Now when I open my eyes, I will see." But when he opened his eyes, it was the same as when he had them closed. After a while he had given up and no longer expected to see the morning sun streaming through his window.

He was not good at being blind. He stumbled into things, and sometimes he would kick out at a chair or other objects in anger when it got in his way. His mood became surly, and he knew he was making life tough on Ben, but he couldn't help it. Sometimes he said things to Ben he really didn't mean, but the darkness made him bitter and afraid, and he wanted to strike out and hurt someone, and Ben was the only one around.

Tim listened to the wind blow and the rain beat against the roof and side of the house. It had been raining off and on for the past two weeks, and the Patawa River, usually not much larger than a creek, had swollen and covered the tiny wooden bridge, stranding Ben and him at the farm. This morning the waters had subsided enough that the bridge was passable, and because they were low on supplies, Ben took the opportunity to go into town. But shortly after he left, the rain began again.

Through the static, the disk jockey announced it was 7:15, and Tim began to realize Ben wouldn't be back tonight. Undoubtedly, the bridge was under water again, and he would have to stay in town.

Tim hadn't stayed by himself overnight—not since he had been blind—and it frightened him.

He got to his feet and felt his way around the chair and into the kitchen. He took a glass from the cabinet and milk from the refrigerator. He hooked his finger over the lip of the glass and poured the milk until he felt it rise to his finger. He found the bread by touch and he identified the jar of peanut butter by smell.

He was biting into the sandwich when he heard a strange noise over the din of the storm. It was a lower sound than that made by the wind and rain, kind of a soft thump. At first, he thought it might be Ben coming home after all and the noise was the door of the pickup being closed. But, no, it wasn't that. This was a softer sound, a lower sound.

He listened intently but heard nothing else. He moved toward the front door, concentrating so hard on listening that he bumped into the end of the couch. He felt his way around it and opened the front door.

The rain was blowing now, the wind whipping the wet, frothy spray against his face. He could hear the branches of the oak tree in the front yard as they writhed under the onslaught of the storm. But he heard nothing else, nothing other than the usual sounds of an early spring squall, and he dismissed the strange noise from his mind.

He finished the sandwich and sat back down in the stuffed chair, propping his feet up again. It seemed as if he spent most of his time now in that chair, but it was one of the few places he felt safe, and although Ben tried to get him to take an interest in other things, he spent many hours each day just sitting and listening to the radio. He didn't care much for television any more. A few times he had listened to it, but there were gaps of silence, and he lost track of the story.

With the electrical interference from the storm, KAAY became nothing but static, and Tim turned it off. For a long time he sat and thought —thought about how things used to be when he could see.

He had had courage then. When you're five-feet-eight and 135 pounds, it takes courage to play defensive safety and bring down ends 50 pounds heavier than you are. But the local football fans said nobody hit as hard as Tim Dixon and that he was the best defensive safety Evening Star had ever had. There had been rumors of a football scholarship to one of the AIC colleges.

It had been the same way in basketball. Raw courage had enabled him to average 15 points a game against guys a head taller than he was.

Courage. Why couldn't he find any of it now, when it really mattered?

From the sound, Tim could tell the wind had died a little and the rain was lighter and more steady now. Maybe, he thought, if it doesn't get any worse, Ben will be able to get back across the bridge late tonight.

He was picturing the muddy water rushing over the planking of the old wooden bridge and the bridge straining against the cables which were woven to its substructure and were the only reason it didn't wash away completely, when he ➔

There was no choice. He had to drive the car—but he was blind.

From: Vol. 64, No. 1, p. 36-39, 63-67, 74.

Tim listened to the wind and rain outside; the radio told him the time and he knew it was getting dark now.

heard another noise that didn't belong outside with the rain.

It was a voice, a small voice, far way, but making a lot of noise. Tim listened.

The voice was frantic, and it was repeating one word over and over again: "Help!"

The voice came closer, and then Tim heard quick, small steps on the front porch. Someone began banging furiously on the door, and the voice, a child's voice, was pleading now. "Help! Help us! Please!"

Tim stumbled to the door and opened it. The voice came from below him, and it belonged to a boy about eight years old. "Help us, mister! Help us! The car went off in the ditch! It's my sister, she's hurt bad!"

Tim stood in the doorway, feeling the damp air on his face. Never had he felt so helpless. The little kid was whimpering now, trying not to cry. It killed Tim to tell him. "I'm blind. I can't help."

The boy stopped his whimpering, and there was a moment of silence. "Isn't there somebody who can help?"

Tim shook his head. "I'm here by myself."

"Do you have a phone?"

Tim shook his head again. "No. I'm sorry."

He expected to hear the boy go to pieces, but he didn't. Instead, his voice took on a strong, determined quality. "Then you've got to help us," he said. "You're the only one, so you've got to help."

Tim started to shake his head again and say no, but suddenly he knew the boy was right. There was no one else. He had to help. It was that simple. He reached out and touched the boy, almost poking his finger in his eye. "I'm going to keep my hand on your shoulder," he said. "You lead the way. Don't let me walk into anything."

They started across the porch. "Steps," the boy said.

"Yes," said Tim. "Five of them." He felt the edge with his foot and they went down them into the yard. "Go straight out to the road, and then walk down the middle of it to where the car is."

"OK," the boy answered. They walked through pools of water in the yard, and Tim's sneakers became soaked. He felt the water slosh up and down as he walked behind the boy.

"What's your name?" he asked, as they stepped onto the gravel road and turned.

"David. David Epperson."

"And your sister?"

"Linda."

"What happened?" He was soaked through now. His hair was hanging over his forehead and clinging to his skin. Water was streaming down his face and neck. His jeans were sticking to his knees and thighs.

"We were going around the curve, and the car just started sliding in the mud. And then it went off into the ditch."

Tim knew the curve. It was a bad one, slanting steeply to one side, dangerous in dry weather and treacherous in wet. And there was a drainage ditch eight feet deep. If the car was in that ditch, the girl could drown. "Is the car in the water?"

"The front is. The car rolled over. It's upside down."

"Your sister's not in the water, is she?"

"No," he replied, "she's just at the edge of it."

If the water was rising, it could still get to her. Tim pushed David a little faster until the boy was almost running. "Here," David said. "Stop. The car's right below us."

"All right," Tim said. "Take my hand and lead me to the edge." He felt his feet sink in the mud, and he lost his balance and went down on his hands and knees, and for the first time since leaving the house he was frightened. What if he slipped off into the water and drowned because he couldn't see how to swim out? He fought back the fear and got to his feet again.

"Straight on down," David said. "It's steep." David went ahead of him, and Tim followed, still holding his hand. The mud sucked at his feet with each step. "The car's right here," David said.

Tim reached out and felt the cold hulk of the automobile. He touched a tire, which was up in the air. Releasing David's hand, he got down on his hands and knees

(*Continued on page 63*)

It was the only hope, even if it seemed a crazy idea at the start.

The bridge was ahead of them and Tim knew it must be under water.

Charles
Lilly

Blind Man's Bluff

(Continued from page 39)

and crawled toward the front of the car.

David was at the side of his sister, who was lying partly in the car and partly out. "Linda! Linda!" he said, "I've got help!"

Tim heard her moan and say, "Good. Good, David." And then she whispered, "It hurts." He crawled in the direction of their voices until he was beside them, until he could feel the warmth of their bodies in the cold rain. He could hear the water rushing by a few feet below them. "Hello," Linda said weakly. "I'm glad to see you. I'm glad David was able to find someone." Tim heard her catch her breath in pain.

"How do you feel?" he asked.

"Bad," she answered. "It's my leg. I think it's broken."

"Anything else?"

"No," she said. "I don't think so. But I just feel awful all over—like I'm in another world."

"Shock," Tim said. "Now listen. Don't you worry. We're going to get you out of here and back up to my house where it's dry and warm, and then we're going to get you to the hospital and you'll be all right." He put his arm around David to give them both strength, but suddenly he was more afraid than he had ever been in his life. Why did he tell her everything would be all right? How could a blind 17-year-old and a child get this girl up to the house? And there was no way they could get her to the hospital. No way at all. He choked down the fear again. He had to think. First things first. "David, can you see her leg?"

"Just barely," he said. "It's so dark . . ."

"Can you tell how badly it's broken?"

"No."

"Then put my hand on her leg and let me see." He asked Linda, "Is the break above or below your knee?"

"I think it's below, but it's hard to tell. The pain is so bad." She talked through clenched teeth.

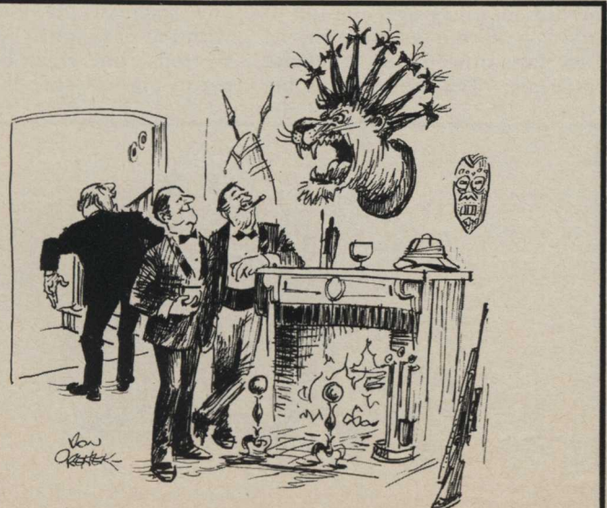
David placed Tim's hand on his sister's knee, and Tim moved his hand down slowly until he found the break just above her ankle. It was a nasty fracture, possibly compound, but he couldn't tell for sure through her pants leg. He could feel the edge of the bone, but he wasn't sure if it had broken through the skin.

Before she could be moved, the leg had to be immobilized. He could send David up to the barn to find some boards suitable for splinting, but he didn't like that idea. Wooden splints could be clumsy and do more harm than good, especially if they were applied to a fracture as bad as this one. Tim tried to think, tried to come up with an alternate idea. He knew that ambulance teams used air splints—plastic bag-like devices they put around broken limbs and then inflated. They worked on the same principle as an air mattress, becoming firm but soft when inflated.

David was getting anxious. "What are we going to do?" he asked.

Tim was still thinking. Maybe he could use an air mattress. He had one—actually it was a small inflatable raft he used to play around with in the swimming hole in the Patawa in the summertime—in the closet of his bedroom. It was the only thing he could think of.

He sent David after it. "And there's a flashlight on the table by the back door. Get it, too," he added. He heard David scrambling up the muddy embankment, and then his feet on the gravel as he ran toward the house.



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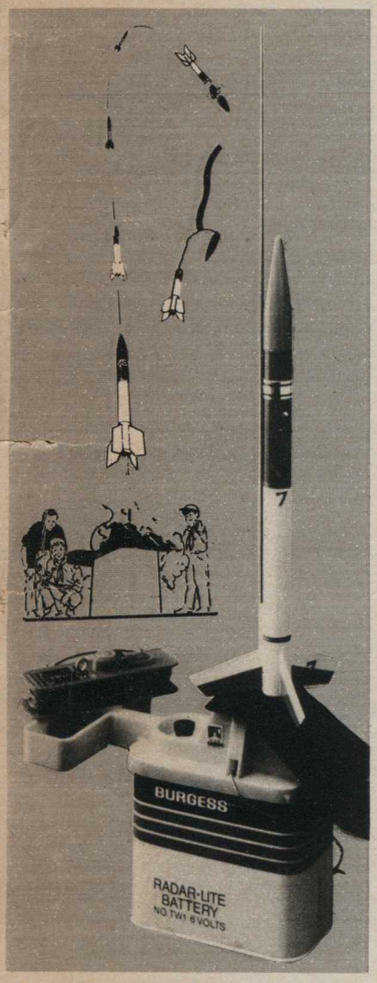

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The rain had eased now, but it was still coming down steadily. The wind had calmed. Tim listened to the water rushing by below them and to the rapid, shallow breathing of the injured girl. "I'm afraid," she said, her voice thick with fright and pain.

She couldn't possibly be any more afraid than he was, he thought. But his words were strong and reassuring when he spoke. "Don't be," he said. "There's nothing to be afraid of. You've just got a broken leg. Everybody gets broken legs. In fact, I've always been jealous of people with broken legs. You know how it is at school. They get to leave class early, and they have somebody carry their books. And they always get all the attention with everybody signing their casts. That's just the way you're going to be in a day or two."

"Do you think so?"

"Sure," he said, though he wasn't sure at all. While he talked to her, he knelt in the mud with his weight on his heels, and he tried to figure out how he was going to get her up the embankment. "Look," he said. "I have to pull your legs clear of the car so we can get the splint on when David gets back. Think you can stand it?"

"I guess so," she said.

"If you don't mind my asking, how much do you weigh?" When he had touched her leg, he had gotten the impression she was a small girl. He was right.

She laughed a weak laugh. "Not quite a hundred pounds."

"Good. That's going to make it easier on all of us. Give me your hand." She stuck her hand in his direction, and he found it, trembling and small in his. He moved his hand up her arm to her shoulder, then got behind her, put his hands under her arms, and gently pulled her through the mud away from the car. She caught her breath again but didn't cry out.

"There," he said, "that will do it. We're on our way now."

"What's your name?" she asked.

"Tim Dixon."

"Where do you go to school?"

He thought a minute. He hadn't gone to school since he had lost his sight. "Evening Star," he said. "How about you?"

"Simity," she replied.

"We beat you in basketball this year."

"Don't be too proud. Everybody beats us."

"What were you doing out here this time of the night?" he asked.

"Today is my sixteenth birthday. I just got my license, and I promised David he'd be the first one to go riding with me. We drove over the bridge across the Patawa, and then when we started back, it was under water. So I thought we'd follow the road this way to see where it came out. I wasn't going very fast. The car just slipped off the road. I couldn't stop it."

Tim tried a little humor. "Happy birthday," he said.

"Yeah. Thanks. What a way to celebrate!"

Tim heard running feet on the road again and then the plop-plop as they hit the mud. David was breathing hard when he sat down in the mud beside them. "You get everything?" Tim asked.

"Yeah, here's the air mattress," he said beween breaths. "I almost never found it. I've got the light."

"He can see that you have the light, silly," Linda said.

David didn't say anything, but Linda's words stunned Tim. *She doesn't know I'm blind!* he thought. He started to tell her, but decided against it. She would know soon enough.

David pushed the air mattress into Tim's hands, and Tim spread it out in the mud alongside Linda's leg, touching her leg gently so he was sure he had the plastic mattress in the right position. "OK," he said to David. "I'm going to lift up her leg, and you slide the mattress under it.

"I'll try not to hurt you," he said to Linda.

Very carefully he put one hand under her leg on each side of the fracture, and then very gently he lifted up her leg. This time a cry of pain escaped from her throat, but David positioned the mattress quickly, and Tim eased her leg back down.

Tim pulled off his T-shirt and began tearing the wet fabric into strips. The rain felt icy cold on his bare back. Putting the others between his teeth, he tied one strip loosely around her leg and the mattress. Folding the mattress over the top of her leg all the way down, he tied three other strips at regular intervals. "Tell me when it begins to feel tight," he said to her as he began to inflate the air mattress.

With each breath the plastic swelled around her leg, until she said it was beginning to feel tight.

"Tell me when it starts to hurt," he said, and more slowly now, he exhaled into the valve.

"It hurts," she said.

He let some of the air escape and shut off the valve. The air mattress was inflated tightly down the entire length of her leg and had immobilized the fracture as well as any air splint. Tim ran his hands over it and felt satisfied.

But that was the easy part, he thought. Now they had to get her up the embankment and to the house, and there was only one way to do it—carry her. "David," he said, "you'll have to use the flashlight and act as my eyes. You stay a few feet ahead of me and watch every step I take. I'll go slow. We'll make it." He wasn't sure at all that they would.

He moved around until he was below Linda on the bank. The water in the ditch had risen more, and he had to stand in it ankle-deep to get into position. "Linda, I'm going to carry you. I want you to relax and trust me. It may hurt a little bit, but there's no other way to get you out of here."

"It's OK," she said. "I'm ready anytime you are."

Tim went down on one knee beside her. She raised herself a little to help him and he got one arm under her back and the other under her knees. Then very slowly he stood up with her. He held her easily, but her added weight made his feet sink deeper through the water into the mud. "What's the footing like?" he asked David.

"Muddy," he replied. "And steep."

"Any holes?"

There was a pause while the boy scanned the embankment with the flashlight. "No," he answered, "but right before you get to the top, there's a kind of

"Stupid there slipped on a banana peel."

hump that you could fall over."

"I guess it's pretty hard for you to see with me in your way, isn't it?" Linda said.

David didn't reply, but somehow what she said made him feel a little more sure of himself. If she hadn't guessed that he was blind with everything he and David had said, then he must be doing pretty well. "Talk to me, David," he said. "Tell me about the mud. Here we go."

He took the first step out of the water. His foot came, but his sneaker didn't. It was the same with the other foot. The sneaker was swallowed up by the mud, and his foot slipped out of it. It was better this way, he thought, as he wiggled his toes in the mud. Although he didn't have the protection of the shoes, he could feel his way along better, and he could dig his toes in to help him keep from slipping.

With Linda in his arms, he began the slow climb up the embankment. Each step seemed to take an hour. He put his lead foot forward and felt with his toes and with his heel. Then he slowly shifted his weight to that foot, cupping his toes for traction and bringing the other foot alongside it. All the while, David talked to him and told him if the footing looked good or bad.

They were near the top, when David warned him that his next step would put him on the hump. Tim moved his right foot forward, feeling across the surface of the mud with his toes. He felt the hump, a rise in the mud a foot high. He put his toes into it and pushed. The top few inches were softer than any of the mud he had come through so far, but as his foot squashed through the surface, the ground felt more solid.

He rocked his weight slowly from one foot to the other, testing this new footing. He shifted Linda a little in his arms until he had their center of gravity balanced directly over his feet.

Their combined weight went to his right foot, and he took the step. The hump caved in, and his footing and balance disappeared. He felt Linda tense, as she anticipated the excruciating pain when the[y] would hit the mud and begin t[o] tumble down the embankmen[t], but the fall was never completed. Tim instinctively relaxed his legs and crumpled to his knees, still holding

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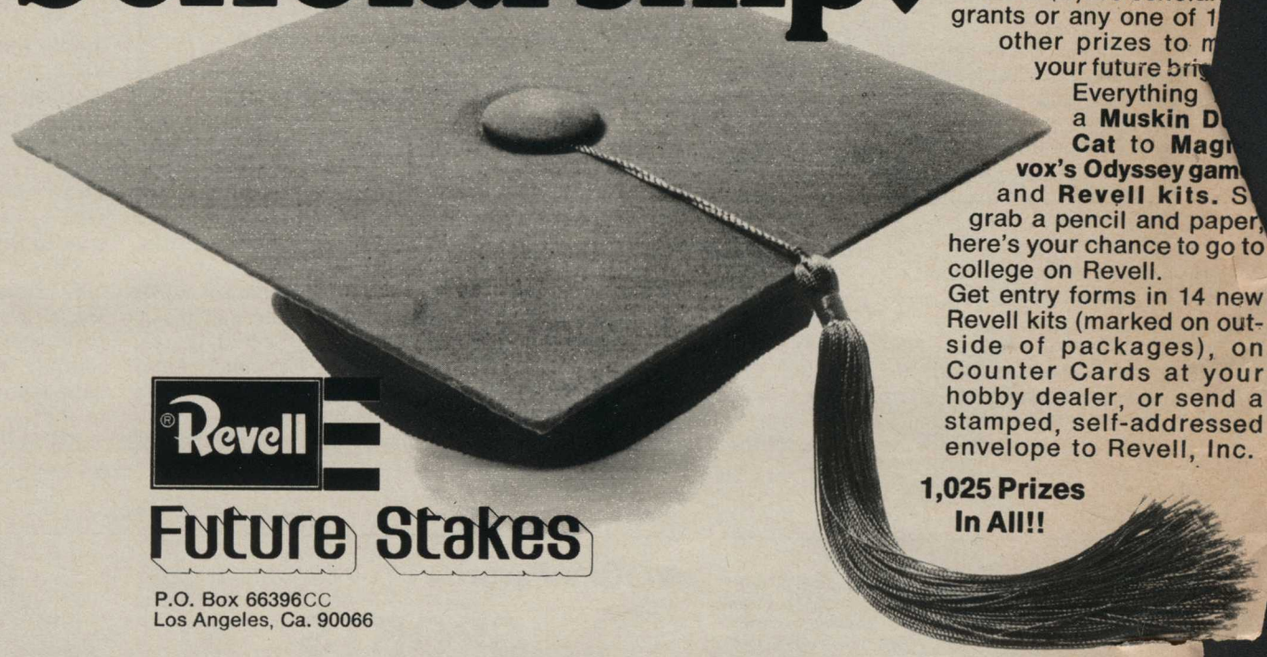

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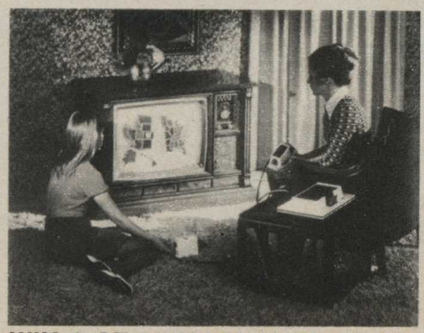

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Linda safely across his chest.

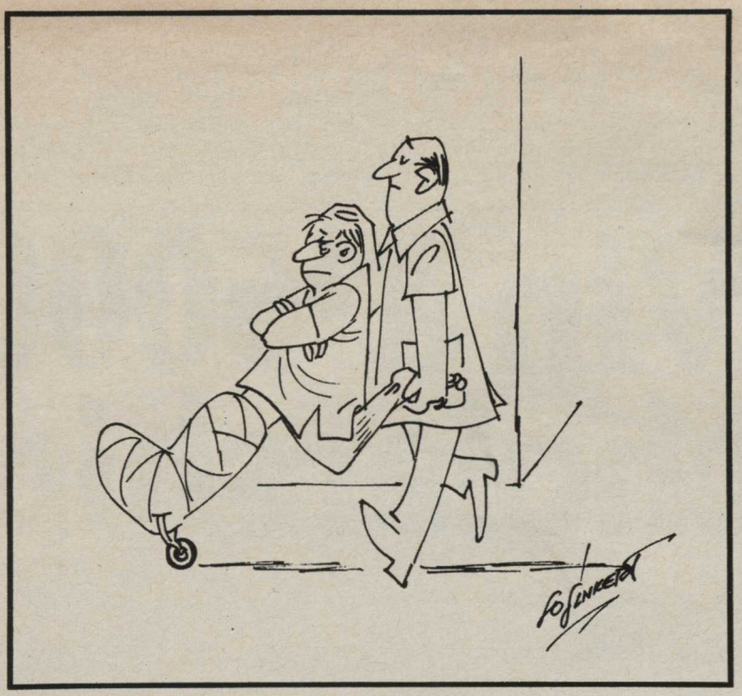
David got behind them and pushed, helping them up. This time Tim moved in closer to the hump and stepped over it. One more careful step and they were standing on the shoulder of the road. "That was close," Tim said, and they all breathed a sigh of relief.

His shoulders and arms ached from Linda's added weight, but he put it out of his mind the same way he had put the blinding pain of wind sprints out of his mind in football practice. He ignored the numbing pain in his feet as the sharp rocks cut into his flesh, and now that they had made it this far, he tried to think of what they would do next.

It had stopped raining. In an hour or two the bridge might be passable. Without rain, the water would subside quickly. But it was late now, and Tim doubted that Ben would return before morning, and Linda needed to be in the hospital before then.

A hundred yards down the road, David directed them off the shoulder, across the yard, and to the house. "Steps," he told Tim, stopping him.

Tim felt for them with his foot. His feet were so numb from the cold and the lacerations from the gravel that he had difficulty feeling them. But after having climbed up out of the ditch, going up the stairs was easy.



David led them through the door, carefully making sure that Linda's leg was not bumped against the door facing. Inside, Tim concentrated and pictured the arrangement of the furniture. Without much trouble and with only a little help from David, he laid Linda on the couch. "Are the lights on?" he asked David.

"Yes. I turned them on when I came after the air mattress."

"At the end of the hall, there's a linen closet. Get some blankets." Linda was cold. Tim could hear her staccato breath and chattering teeth. They had to get her warm, and they had to get her to the hospital. They couldn't wait until morning.

David brought the blankets, and they covered her, but she continued to shiver. "How do you feel?" Tim asked her. It was a dumb question, he thought.

"I'm OK," she lied. "Th-thanks t-to you. You're b-blind, aren't you?"

"Yes," he replied.

"I d-didn't know," she said, "until you asked about th-the l-lights. I wouldn't have b-b-believed it. You've g-got courage. M-more than m-me. I'm st-still scared." She began to cry a little.

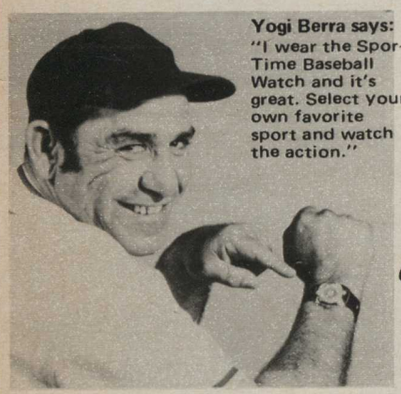
They piled more blankets on top of her, and Tim sat down on the floor beside her. She just didn't know, he thought, how little courage he really had. "Do you trust me?" he asked her.

"Y-yes."

"Then David and I are going to get you to the hospital, and we're going to do it now." He said to David, "Guide me outside to the garage."

They stood together by Ben's old Chevrolet and listened to the singing of the tree frogs, a sure sign that it was through raining. "You and I," Tim said, "are going to drive your sister to the hospital."

"How?" David asked.



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"The same way we brought her to the house—with you acting as my eyes. I'll drive, and you keep me on the road just the way you did earlier. You know your left from your right, don't you?"

"Sure," David replied, his voice a noise of disbelief.

"OK. Get in the car. We'll bring it around to the front of the house."

The slick upholstery was cool to his touch, the smell of the interior damp and familiar. Tim felt the steering wheel. It was cold and hard, but his hands were at home on it. The keys were in the ignition, where Ben always left them.

Tim put the gear shift in neutral, depressed the clutch, and started the engine. It came quickly to life, idling smoothly. He gave it a few moments to warm up, then shifted into reverse. "Cross your fingers," he said to David, "and keep me from running into anything." He could hear David squirming around in the seat to watch behind them.

It was easy for Tim to picture the garage and the driveway. Hundreds of times he had backed out of it. But never blind! For a split second he wondered if anyone in the entire world had ever tried anything like this. Instinctively, he patted his hip pocket to check if he had his wallet and driver's license, and almost chuckled because it was such a ridiculous thing to do.

Because the car was always driven straight into the garage, the wheels would be in the proper position. He eased out on the clutch, and the car began to move, creeping from the garage like a snail not in much of a hurry. When he thought he had cleared the garage door, he asked David to confirm his guess.

"I don't know," David replied. "I can't see. You haven't turned on the lights."

This time Tim did chuckle a little. His hand went to the light switch. "How about now?" he asked.

"You're out of the garage."

Tim cut the wheel sharply, backing up into the bare spot in the yard he and Ben had always used to turn around in. He could tell by the way the tires rolled on the ground and the strain on the engine that he had backed up far enough, and even before David told him to stop, he was shifting into forward and turning the wheels down the driveway toward the road. "Here's where it gets tricky," he said to David. "When the rear wheels get even with the end of the driveway, tell me to turn."

David told him, but again he already knew. He felt the front end lift and the engine strain a little more as they went up onto the road, and then he felt the rear tires settle into the slight depression at the end of the driveway. He turned the wheel to the left and eased the car up onto the rain-washed gravel of the road.

He stopped. Suddenly he had no idea if he had turned far enough. It felt as if he had.

"A little more," David said. "There. Now straight ahead."

Tim rode the clutch—*Ben wouldn't like that,* he thought—keeping the movement of the car to a slow crawl. "A little to the left . . . more . . . that's enough. Stop. We're in front of the house."

"Are we even with the walk?"

"It's in front of us, by the front tires," David said.

Tim started the car forward again to bring the back door of the car even with the walk, so they could put Linda on the back seat.

"Stop!" David shouted suddenly. "Stop!" But it was too late. There was a hard thump and then the rending of metal.

Tim knew what it was. "You don't have a mailbox anymore," said David.

When they got back into the house, Linda was worse. She was still shivering violently, and shock had driven her into a state of semiconsciousness. She was hardly aware Tim was

(Continued on page 74)

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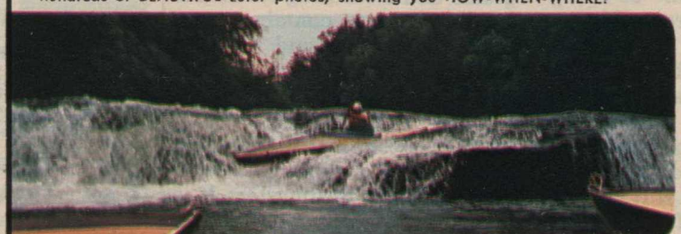

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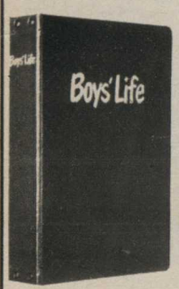

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Oliver S. Johnson
Publisher

Blind Man's Bluff

(Continued from page 67)

again picking her up in his strong arms or that David was leading him to the car. Across the porch and down the steps they went, and with the utmost care, they laid her on the back seat and covered her with the blankets.

They started down the road with all the speed of a crippled tortoise, the car rolling so slowly they could hear the crunch of each rock under its tires. Tim could feel the slight path of the road, but in many stretches the rain had washed it away, and then he had to rely entirely on David.

"To the right a little . . . just a little bit more . . . too much, too much," David would say.

Gradually Tim's confidence in his ability to handle the car and his trust in David's ability to keep them on the road grew, and, finally, he was able to let the clutch out completely. "How fast are we going?" he asked.

"I don't know. The needle doesn't say." That meant they were going less than five miles an hour. The speedometer wouldn't register below that speed. At this rate, it would take at least an hour to reach the bridge over the Patawa.

Tim didn't like to think about the bridge. When they got there, the rain would have been stopped for about two hours. That might or might not mean the bridge wouldn't be under water. If it was under water, they would have to wait until the river subsided or risk fording the bridge and having a tire slip down into a hole where one of the planks was washed away. Tim put it out of his mind. He would "cross that bridge when he came to it."

He had to concentrate on the road now, try to feel it through the steering column, try to picture it as it lay ahead of them, winding slowly through the Patawa Valley. But most of all he had to listen to David and steer where he said. "Left . . . more . . . there's a curve . . . left, left . . . OK, right."

Tim's neck and shoulders began to ache, and he realized he was as tense as a steel spring. He forced himself to relax and felt the relief spread through his muscles. Behind him he could hear Linda's shallow, rapid breathing.

For a long time he had been aware the road was sloping downward, but when he heard the roar of the Patawa, it still caught him by surprise. They were there. The bridge was ahead of them. He stopped the car.

"What's wrong?" David asked. He had been concentrating so hard on guiding them and not getting his right mixed up with his left he hadn't heard the water.

"It's the river," Tim said. "Can't you hear it?"

". . . yeah," came David's slow reply, his voice thick with foreboding and awe.

Tim felt himself go limp with fear. The whole idea was crazy. It would be impossible for a blind boy to maneuver a car safely across the bridge.

He sucked in a deep breath and exhaled in one big rush of air—the way he used to before taking foul shots at the free-throw line in basketball. It was a trick he had used to get his nerves under control. "Well, David," he said, "are you ready?"

(To be concluded next month.)

"Just caught the one, eh?"